

REC'D 2/28/11

MELROSE PUBLIC LIBRARY
Request for Reevaluation of Library Material

Date: 2/25/11 Library Card #: _____

Your Name: _____
(Last) (First) (MI)

Address: _____
(Mailing) (City) (State) (Zip)

Phone No. (____) _____

Whom do you represent?

☒ Myself _____
☐ Organization (be specific) _____

Other _____

Description of material:

Author: Stephen Chbosky Title: the Perks of Being a Wallflower

Publisher/Date: Simon & Schuster 1999

Type of Material:

Please respond to the following questions:

Amazon. com

Barnes and Noble. com

PABBS. com

1. Have you seen or heard reviews of this material? yes

If yes, please name source(s) American Library Association has listed this book on top 10 list of challenged books 4 yrs in a row 2006-2009

reviews. wikispaces. com review states book is written at 4th grade reading level and due to content book is not suitable for use under grade 9. Advises teachers to caution content to administrators, parents + students prior to use to avoid shock + surprise.

2. What do you object to in this work? Please cite specific instances see enclosed material

I believe this book should require a caution or warning label.

This book may be better suited to the adult section rather than a teen section.

3. What do you believe is the theme or purpose of this work?

It is a fictional story that touches upon taboo subjects in our society.

4. Are you aware of the library's purpose in buying this book?

The library maintains the right and responsibility to provide reading material of all kinds to the public

5. What action do you recommend the library take on this item?

The Perks of Being a Wallflower should be placed in the adult section of the library.

6. In place of this item would you care to recommend other materials which you consider to be of equal or superior quality for the purpose intended?

N/A

7. Have you read Melrose Public Library's Collection Development Policy and the Freedom to Read and Freedom to Read statements?

☒ Yes ☐ No

The Melrose Public Library appreciates your interest in our library's collection. You will receive written notification of the disposition of the request within two weeks.

Signature of Complainant: _____

Received by: _____

Date: _____ Time Received: _____

I ask that you review the enclosed material specifically the paragraphs of pages 31 and 158. It is my belief that reading creates imagery. If this same type of imagery would necessitate a Rated R rating for a film the same restriction should apply to where a library should place a book. It would require placement in the adult section.



Trustees of Melrose Public Library

April 5, 2011

The regular meeting of the Board of Library Trustees was held Tuesday, April 5, 2011. Present were: Mary M. Edwards, Carol B. Hoffman, Vicki L. Kaufman, Nancy F. Kukura, Rosemary U. McIntire, Edward W. Waystack, Linda C. Walsh and Dennis J. Kelley.

The monthly bills were reviewed and approved for payment. The minutes of the last meeting were approved as written.

C. Richard Carlson, VP, UBS, met with the trustees to review the progress of trust funds. Mr. Carlson suggested that the funds could earn a better return if they were "unitized" into one investment fund with each fund retaining its appropriate share (percentage) of the whole. Funds would retain their unique name. The appropriate time to implement this change would be at the end of the fiscal year after the audit and with the approval of the City Solicitor.

The second installment of the state aid grant has been received (\$12,916.60).

Dennis Kelley announced that Liz Goodwin was nominated by Diane Wall to be the Massachusetts Library Association paraprofessional of the year. The winner will be announced at the MLA Annual Conference.

Dennis Kelley informed the trustees that an official challenge was received for the book titled *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. A patron wanted the book removed from the Young Adult Collection. A committee of three professional staff members read and discussed the book and determined that the book should remain in the Young Adult Collection. It should be noted that there are approximately thirty copies of the book in the NOBLE database and all copies are in YA collections. The patron was informed of the committee's decision.

The trustees reviewed and approved the FY12 library budget with the understanding that in September the alderman will be asked to approve an additional appropriation for the library as follows: \$61,500 from trust funds, and approximately \$13,000 from the Donation Account and \$13,000 from the Fine Account.

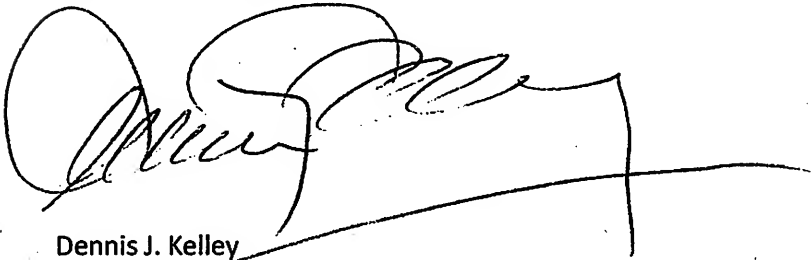
Dennis Kelley announced that two copper downspouts were stolen from the exterior of the building. The city's insurance carries a large deductible so the downspouts are not an insurance matter.

Linda Walsh announced that MPL will participate in *Library Snapshot Day* (April 14). A photographer from the *Melrose Free Press* will take pictures at various library events throughout the day.

In keeping with the Board's computer replacement policy, six new computers were purchased with trust fund income and an additional computer will be purchased at a later date.

Dennis Kelley expressed his sincere appreciation for the support and friendship of the trustees throughout his tenure as library director.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dennis Kelley', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Dennis J. Kelley

Secretary to the Board of Library Trustees

EXHIBIT A

Library Bill of Rights

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.

V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

VI. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable bases, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

Adopted June 18, 1948.

Amended February 2, 1961, and January 23, 1980,
inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996,
by the ALA Council.

EXHIBIT B

THE FREEDOM TO READ

The freedom to read is essential to our democracy. It is continuously under attack. Private groups and public authorities in various parts of the country are working to remove or limit access to reading materials, to censor content in schools, to label "controversial" views, to distribute lists of "objectionable" books or authors, and to purge libraries. These actions apparently rise from a view that our national tradition of free expression is no longer valid; that censorship and suppression are needed to avoid the subversion of politics and the corruption of morals. We, as citizens devoted to reading and as librarians and publishers responsible for disseminating ideas, wish to assert the public interest in the preservation of the freedom to read.

Most attempts at suppression rest on a denial of the fundamental premise of democracy: that the ordinary citizen, by exercising critical judgment, will accept the good and reject the bad. The censors, public and private, assume that they should determine what is good and what is bad for their fellow citizens.

We trust Americans to recognize propaganda and misinformation, and to make their own decisions about what they read and believe. We do not believe they need the help of censors to assist them in this task. We do not believe they are prepared to sacrifice their heritage of a free press in order to be "protected" against what others think may be bad for them. We believe they still favor free enterprise in ideas and expression.

These efforts at suppression are related to a larger pattern of pressures being brought against education, the press, art and images, films, broadcast media, and the Internet. The problem is not only one of actual censorship. The shadow of fear cast by these pressures leads, we suspect, to an even larger voluntary curtailment of expression by those who seek to avoid controversy.

Such pressure toward conformity is perhaps natural to a time of accelerated change. And yet suppression is never more dangerous than in such a time of social tension. Freedom has given the United States the elasticity to endure strain. Freedom keeps open the path of novel and creative solutions, and enables change to come by choice. Every silencing of a heresy, every enforcement of an orthodoxy, diminishes the toughness and resilience of our society and leaves it the less able to deal with controversy and difference.

Now as always in our history, reading is among our greatest freedoms. The freedom to read and write is almost the only means for making generally available ideas or manners of expression that can initially command only a small audience. The written word is the natural medium for the new idea and the untried voice from which come the original contributions to social growth. It is essential to the extended discussion that serious thought requires, and to the accumulation of knowledge and ideas into organized collections.

We believe that free communication is essential to the preservation of a free society and a creative culture. We believe that these pressures toward conformity present the danger of limiting the range and variety of inquiry and expression on which our democracy and our culture depend. We believe that every American community must jealously guard the freedom to publish and to circulate, in order to preserve its own freedom to read. We believe that publishers and librarians have a profound responsibility to give validity to that freedom to read by making it

possible for the readers to choose freely from a variety of offerings. The freedom to read is guaranteed by the Constitution. Those with faith in free people will stand firm on these constitutional guarantees of essential rights and will exercise the responsibilities that accompany these rights.

We therefore affirm these propositions:

1. *It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions, including those that are unorthodox or unpopular with the majority.*

Creative thought is by definition new, and what is new is different. The bearer of every new thought is a rebel until that idea is refined and tested. Totalitarian systems attempt to maintain themselves in power by the ruthless suppression of any concept that challenges the established orthodoxy. The power of a democratic system to adapt to change is vastly strengthened by the freedom of its citizens to choose widely from among conflicting opinions offered freely to them. To stifle every nonconformist idea at birth would mark the end of the democratic process. Furthermore, only through the constant activity of weighing and selecting can the democratic mind attain the strength demanded by times like these. We need to know not only what we believe but why we believe it.

2. *Publishers, librarians, and booksellers do not need to endorse every idea or presentation they make available. It would conflict with the public interest for them to establish their own political, moral, or aesthetic views as a standard for determining what should be published or circulated.*

Publishers and librarians serve the educational process by helping to make available knowledge and ideas required for the growth of the mind and the increase of learning. They do not foster education by imposing as mentors the patterns of their own thought. The people should have the freedom to read and consider a broader range of ideas than those that may be held by any single librarian or publisher or government or church. It is wrong that what one can read should be confined to what another thinks proper.

3. *It is contrary to the public interest for publishers or librarians to bar access to writings on the basis of the personal history or political affiliations of the author.*

No art or literature can flourish if it is to be measured by the political views or private lives of its creators. No society of free people can flourish that draws up lists of writers to whom it will not listen, whatever they may have to say.

4. *There is no place in our society for efforts to coerce the taste of others, to confine adults to the reading matter deemed suitable for adolescents, or to inhibit the efforts of writers to achieve artistic expression.*

To some, much of modern expression is shocking. But is not much of life itself shocking? We cut off literature at the source if we prevent writers from dealing with the stuff of life. Parents and teachers have a responsibility to prepare the young to meet the diversity of experiences in life to which they will be exposed, as they have a responsibility to help them learn to think critically for themselves. These are affirmative responsibilities, not to

be discharged simply by preventing them from reading works for which they are not yet prepared. In these matters values differ, and values cannot be legislated; nor can machinery be devised that will suit the demands of one group without limiting the freedom of others.

5. *It is not in the public interest to force a reader to accept with any expression the prejudgment of a label characterizing it or its author as subversive or dangerous.*

The ideal of labeling presupposes the existence of individuals or groups with wisdom to determine by authority what is good or bad for the citizen. It presupposes that individuals must be directed in making up their minds about the ideas they examine. But Americans do not need others to do their thinking for them.

6. *It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians, as guardians of the people's freedom to read, to contest encroachments upon that freedom by individuals or groups seeking to impose their own standards or tastes upon the community at large.*

It is inevitable in the give and take of the democratic process that the political, the moral, or the aesthetic concepts of an individual or group will occasionally collide with those of another individual or group. In a free society individuals are free to determine for themselves what they wish to read, and each group is free to determine what it will recommend to its freely associated members. But no group has the right to take the law into its own hands, and to impose its own concept of politics or morality upon other members of a democratic society. Freedom is no freedom if it is accorded only to the accepted and the inoffensive.

7. *It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians to give full meaning to the freedom to read by providing books that enrich the quality and diversity of thought and expression. By the exercise of this affirmative responsibility, they can demonstrate that the answer to a "bad" book is a good one, the answer to a "bad" idea is a good one.*

The freedom to read is of little consequence when the reader cannot obtain matter fit for that reader's purpose. What is needed is not only the absence of restraint, but the positive provision of opportunity for the people to read the best that has been thought and said. Books are the major channel by which the intellectual inheritance is handed down, and the principal means of its testing and growth. The defense of the freedom to read requires of all publishers and librarians the utmost of their faculties, and deserves of all citizens the fullest of their support.

We state these propositions neither lightly nor as easy generalizations. We here stake out a lofty claim for the value of the written word. We do so because we believe that it is possessed of enormous variety and usefulness, worthy of cherishing and keeping free. We realize that the application of these propositions may mean the dissemination of ideas and manners of expression that are repugnant to many persons. We do not state these propositions in the comfortable belief that what people read is unimportant. We believe rather that what people read is deeply important; that ideas can be dangerous; but that the suppression of ideas is fatal to a democratic society. Freedom itself is a dangerous way of life, but it is ours.

This statement was originally issued in May of 1953 by the Westchester Conference of the American Library Association and the American Book Publishers Council, which in 1970 consolidated with the American Educational Publishers Institute to become the Association of American Publishers.

Adopted June 25, 1953; revised January 28, 1972, January 16, 1991, July 12, 2000, by the ALA Council and the AAP Freedom to Read Committee.

**A Joint Statement by:
American Library Association and
Association of American Publishers**

Subsequently Endorsed by:

- American Association of University Professors
- American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression
- American Society of Journalists and Authors
- American Society of Newspaper Editors
- Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith
- Association of American University Presses
- Center for Democracy & Technology
- The Children's Book Council
- The Electronic Frontier Foundation
- Feminists for Free Expression
- Freedom to Read Foundation
- International Reading Association
- The Media Institute
- National Coalition Against Censorship
- National PTA
- Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays
- PEN American Center
- People for the American Way
- Student Press Law Center
- The Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression

Melrose Public Library Material Selection Policy

The Trustees of Melrose Public Library, recognizing the varied interests and needs of this community, declare as a matter of policy that:

1. The responsibility for the selection of print and non-print material is vested in the Library Director and, under his direction, members of the library staff who are qualified by reason of education and training.
2. The criteria for selection are as follows: interest, information, authority and cost. No material shall be excluded of the race, nationality, and political or social views of the author.
3. The library recognizes its responsibility to provide material on all sides of controversial issues.
4. Censorship is viewed as a purely individual matter. Any private citizen has the right to reject for himself material of which he does not approve; however, he may not restrict the freedom of others to have access to library material.
5. A primary obligation of this library is to uphold the American doctrine of freedom of speech and of the press. The Board of Library Trustees subscribes to and supports the *Library Bill of Rights and Freedom to read statement*.
6. The parents or legal guardians must assume responsibility for material selected by their children. Library material selection procedures will not be inhibited by the possibility that items of a controversial nature may come into the possession of children.
7. Upon written request, the Director will review individual decisions regarding specific titles. The library will resist, however, the attempt of any individual or organization to remove so-called objectionable material from the collection.

See www.classkc.org for excerpts

"The Boy in the Basement"

by Michael Ondaatje
 217 pages, paperback
 Pocket Books, a division of Simon & Schuster, Inc.
 Copyright 1994

- Excerpts and other information on this book is from www.parentsrightscoalition.org website. The printing/edition the page number reference refers to is unknown, but we have verified the excerpts to be correct. There is much more controversial material in this book than that below.
- The book is aimed at teenagers, and is told from a teenage boy's perspective.
- The book contains explicit references and discussion regarding:
 - Sexual acts between teenagers.
 - Male masturbation.
 - Oral-genital sex.
 - A great deal of profanity.
 - Male homosexual acts between teenaged boys, including kissing, seduction/"having a crush" and anal sex.
 - Illegal drug use.
 - Homosexual acts between men and boys.
 - Sex between a boy and a dog.
 - Female masturbation using an object.

Page 3-4 [The book starts out with Charlie's friend committing suicide. It is suggested that his home life and parents were the cause.]

His mom played bridge with one of Michael's neighbors and they heard the gunshot...The Counselor said that he suspected that Michael had "problems" at home" and didn't feel like he had anyone to talk to. That's maybe why he felt all alone and killed himself...Michael's funeral was strange because his father didn't cry.

Page 12 [Charlie accidentally walks in while a his sister is having sex with a boy.]

And I opened the door to the basement, and my sister and this boy were naked.

He was on top of her, and her legs were draped over either side of the couch. And she screamed at me in a whisper.

"Get out. You pervert."

..."Yes. He is." That's all my sister could say.

Page 21 [He discovers masturbation.]

Do you know what "masturbation" is? I think you probably do because you are older than me. But

just in case, I will tell you. Masturbation is when you rub your genitals until you have an orgasm..
Wow!

I thought that in those movies and television shows when they talk about having a coffee break that they should have a masturbation break. But then again, I think this would decrease productivity.

Page 27 [More on masturbation...]

I guess I forgot to mention in my last letter that it was Patrick who told me about masturbation. I guess I forgot to tell you how often I do it now, which is a lot. I don't like to look at pictures. I just close my eyes and dream about a lady I do not know. And I try not to feel ashamed....

One night, I felt so guilty that I promised God that I would never do it again. So, I started using blankets, but then the blankets hurt, so I started using pillows, but then the pillows hurt, so I went back to [the] normal [way].

Page 30 [He is forced to stay in his room while his brother throws a party. A boy brings a girl in and seduces her, while Charlie watches...]

Every ten minutes or so, a drunk girl or boy would stumble in my room to see if they could make out there or something. Then, they would see me and walk away. That is, except for this one couple.

This one couple, whom I was told later were very popular and in love, stumbled into my room and asked if I minded them using it. I told them that my brother and sister said I had to stay here, and they asked if they could use the room anyway with me still in it. I said I didn't see why not, so they closed the door and started kissing. Kissing very hard. After a few minutes, the boy's hand went up the girl's shirt, and she started protesting.

"C'mon, Dave." "What?" "The kid's in here."

And the boy kept working up the girl's shirt, and as much as she said no, he kept working it. And the boy kept working up the girl's shirt, and as much as she said no, he kept working it. After a few minutes, she stopped protesting, and he pulled her shirt off, and she had a white bra on with lace. I honestly didn't know what to do by this point. Pretty soon, he took off her bra and started to kiss her breasts. And then he put his hand down her pants, and she started moaning. I think they were both very drunk. He reached to take off her pants, but she started crying really hard, so he reached for his own. He pulled his pants and underwear down to his knees.

"Please. Dave. No."

But the boy just talked soft to her about how good she looked and things like that, and she grabbed his penis with her hands and started moving it. I wish I could describe this a little more nicely without using words like penis, but that was the way it was.

Page 31. [...and the boy sodomizes the girl while Charlie watches.]

After a few minutes, the boy pushed the girl's head down, and she started to kiss his penis. She was still crying. Finally, she stopped crying because he put his penis in her mouth, and I don't think you can cry in that position. I had to stop watching at that point because I started to feel sick, but it kept going on, and they kept doing other things, and she kept saying "no." Even when I covered my ears, I could still hear her say that.

Page 36. [One of several scenes of boys in various stages of homosexual relationships.]

As we were leaving, Sam turned to Bob. "I still think you're an asshole."...

When I got out of the bathroom, I heard a noise in the room where we left our coats. I opened the door, and I saw Patrick kissing Brad. It was a stolen type of kissing. They heard me in the door and turned around.

And Patrick smiled. And Bob started to make fun of him having a crush on the quarterback. And Patrick smiled more.

Page 44. [Charlie watching two of his friends having anal sex with each other.]

When most people left, Brad and Patrick went into Patrick's room.

They had sex for the first time that night.

I don't want to go into detail about it, because it's pretty private stuff, but I will say that Brad assumed the role of the girl in terms of where you put things. I think that's pretty important to tell you. When they were finished, Brad started to cry really hard. He had been drinking a lot. And getting really stoned.

No matter what Patrick did, Brad kept crying. Brad wouldn't even let Patrick hold him, which seems rather sad to me because if I have sex with some, I would want to hold them.

Finally, Patrick just pulled up Brad's pants, and said to him. "Just pretend you're passed out."

Page 45-47 [Describing how Brad's reaction to his homosexual relationship.]

Brad's parents never did figure out why their son was getting stoned and drunk all the time.

Neither did anybody else. Except the people who knew.

I asked Patrick if he felt sad that he had to keep it a secret, and Patrick just said that he wasn't sad because at least for not, Brad doesn't have to get drunk or stoned to make love.

P. 136 [This kind of "colorful" speech the author uses.]

"What the fuck is wrong with you?"... "And I thought Brad was fucked-up. Jesus."

Page 143 [Another weird scene that seemed to have no meaning except for shock.]

I guess the mom had been searching for the little boy for a long time because she came running up to the information desk, and when she saw the little boy, she started crying. She held him tightly and told him never to run off again. Then, she thanked the older kid who had helped, and all the older kid said was, "Next time just watch him a little fucking better."

P. 158 [A scene at night on a deserted golf course.]

"...they're just about to 'do it' when Parker realizes he forgot the condoms. They're both naked on this putting green. They both want each other. There's no condom. So, what do you think happened?

"I don't know."

"They did it doggie style with one of the sandwich bags!"

Page 159 [This is too weird to describe...]

There was a guy named Carl Burns and everyone called him C.B. And one day C.B. got so drunk at a party that he tried to "fuck" the host's dog.

And there was this guy they called "Action Jack" because supposedly he was caught masturbating at a drunk party. And at every pep rally, the kids would clap and chant, Action Jack...clap clap clap...Action Jack.

Page 160 [A girl who masturbated with a hot dog...]

There were other stories and other names...Sheila, who allegedly masturbated with a hot dog and had to go to the emergency room. The list went on and on.

Page 160 [Charlie speaking -- he begins to engage in homosexual acts, also.]

He drove me home and pulled up in the driveway. We hugged good night, and when I was just about to let go, he held me a little tighter. And he moved his face to mine. And he kissed me. A real kiss. Then, he pulled away real slow...And moved into kiss me again. And I just let him. And I don't know why. We stayed in his car for a long time. We didn't do anything other than kiss.

Page 161 [A scene about a park where men pick up boys to have sex with them.]

One night Patrick took me to this park where men go and find each other. Patrick told me that if I didn't want to be bothered by anyone that I should just not make eye contact. He said that eye contact is how you agree to fool around anonymously. Nobody talks. They just find places to go. After a while, Patrick saw someone he liked. He asked me if I needed any cigarettes, and when I said no, he patted my shoulder and walked away with this boy. ... So, tonight, he dropped me off at home. It was the night we went back to the park where men meet. And the night he saw Brad there with some guy.

Page 162 [Charlie and his friend go back to the park...]

It was the night we went back to the park where men meet. And the night he saw Brad there with some guy.

Page 171 [Discussing their parties...]

Whoever lost the dance contest had to pretend he or she was having sex with a large stuffed Gumby doll, so I quickly showed my sister and her boyfriend how to dance the Time Warp, so they wouldn't lose the contest...I don't think I could have handled her pretending to have sex with a large stuffed Gumby.

Page 173 [Discussing his homosexual relationship with Patrick.]

I know Patrick will be around, but I'm afraid that maybe since he isn't sad, he won't want to spend time with me. I know that's wrong in my head, but it feels that way sometimes.

Page 173 [Discussing Patrick's other homosexual relationship, etc.]

I hope Brad and Patrick decide to make up and dance in front of the whole school. And that Alice is secretly a lesbian and in love with Brad's girlfriend Nancy (and vice versa), so nobody feels left out.

Page 208 [This starts the final chapter of the book. This is how the author ends Charlie's story.]
I've been in the hospital for the past two months. They just released me yesterday. The doctor told me that my mother and father found me sitting on the couch in the family room. I was completely naked, just watching the television, which wasn't on. I wouldn't speak or snap out of it, they said.

- *In Fairfax County Public School Middle School Library System*

- *For Additional excerpts see www.librarypatrons.org*

~~THE SMALL BOYS CAME EARLY TO THE HANGING~~

~~THE BLOOD FROM THE BEHEADED COCK WAS USED IN CURSE SPRAYS OVER WITNESSES TO THE HANGING~~

~~Lots and lots of controversial material. Some of it is as follows:~~

- ~~- "The small boys came early to the hanging" is opening line of book~~
- ~~- Blood from beheaded cock used in curse sprays over witnesses to hanging~~
- ~~- Small child clubbed with "sickening sound of blow" to head~~



MELROSE PUBLIC LIBRARY

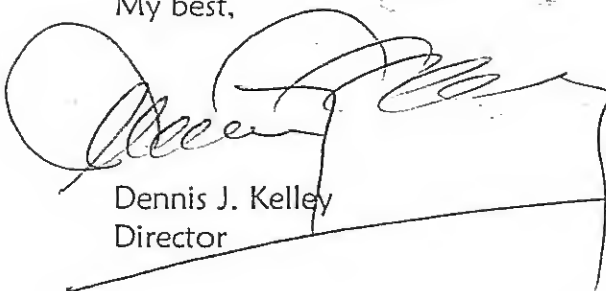
March 1, 2011

Dear _____,

Your written challenge concerning *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky is being evaluated by the library's professional staff; their written recommendation concerning your request will be sent to you in approximately two weeks. The report will be based on Melrose Public Library's established *Collection Development Policy* and will reflect an unbiased and objective review of the title in question.

Constructive input from library patrons helps to build a stronger, more relevant public library. I am grateful to you for taking the time to contact me regarding your concerns.

My best,



Dennis J. Kelley
Director

c: Linda C. Walsh, Assistant Director



MELROSE PUBLIC LIBRARY

March 17, 2011

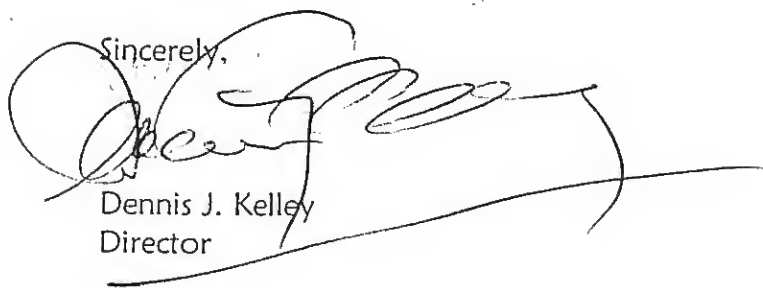
I appointed a committee of three professional staff members to review your complaint concerning *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky. Each committee member read the book; I enclose their report for your review.

I understand that you found the book distasteful, however, according to the *Melrose Public Library Material Selection Policy*, "censorship is viewed as purely an individual matter ... any private citizen has the right to reject for him/her self material which he/she does not approve; however, he/she may not restrict the freedom of others to have access to library material."

Based on the report of the *Challenged Book Review Committee*, and in light the *Melrose Public Library Material Selection Policy*, the *Library Bill of Rights* and *The Freedom to Read Statement*, together with positive reviews from a number of trusted sources, and the fact that over thirty print copies of the book and seven audio copies exist in Young Adult collections of the NOBLE Consortium, I must tell you that *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* will remain in the Young Adult Section of the Melrose Public Library.

I am grateful to you for taking the time to contact me regarding this issue. I thank you for your interest and concern.

Sincerely,



Dennis J. Kelley
Director

c: Challenged Book Review Committee



MELROSE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Date: March 15, 2011
To: Dennis J. Kelley, Director
From: Challenged Book Review Committee
Linda C. Walsh, Assistant Director
Shelley L. O'Brien, Young Adult Librarian
Diane R. Wall, Adult Services Librarian
Subject: "Perks of Being a Wallflower" – committee recommendation

.....

Per your direction, the committee members have read and discussed the book "Perks of Being a Wallflower," by Stephen Chbosky. There are currently over 30 print copies of this book in the NOBLE system, including the two owned by the Melrose Public Library – all copies are in the Teen/YA collections. In addition, there are 7 copies of the audio version of the book, none of which are owned by Melrose Public Library.

"Perks of Being a Wallflower" is a fictional account of a 15 year old boy's freshman year in high school. It is written as a series of letters to an anonymous recipient; the letters serve the function of a diary for Charlie, the main character. Charlie's freshman year is full of a variety of ups and downs as he re-lives memories from his childhood while learning to navigate the high-school world. The book contains some graphic language and situations, which could certainly be shocking to some readers. However, the author is reflecting realistic language and situations for many high school students; to have written the book without these scenes would have lessened the impact of the story as a whole.

In selecting books for the library, several factors are considered, including professional reviews of the book and interest in the community. "Perks of Being a Wallflower" was reviewed by professional journals, including School Library Journal. The re-evaluation request has recommended that the title be moved to the adult collection and/or be given a caution or warning label. While we understand that the situations represented in this book may be mature for some of the younger members of this group, we feel that it is appropriate to the young adult age group in general, which covers a range from middle to high school. We base this opinion on our personal reading of the book, as well as the fact that School Library Journal placed the book in the "Grade 9 and up" category. Additionally, a neighboring town has placed this title on their required reading list for high school freshmen.

To remove this book from the Young Adult collection for which it was purchased would be in direct opposition to the Freedom to Read statement as set forth by the American Library Association. The library does occasionally use stickers or labels as directional aids for patrons (i.e., for mysteries, biographies, etc.). However, the use of labels designed to restrict access to library material would be in conflict with the Mission Statement of the Melrose Public Library, as well as the American Library Association's statement on labeling and rating systems (an interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights), attached herein. It is the responsibility of the library to make a variety of books, covering many topics

and writing styles, available to the public; it is the responsibility of each patron (and the parents of younger patrons) to decide which of those books they wish to read. While we do not consider it appropriate to impose moral judgments on our patron's reading selections, we do encourage parents of young adults to guide their own children's reading choices.

It is the recommendation of this committee, based on the Collection Development Policy of the Melrose Public Library, that the book "The Perks of Being a Wallflower" not be removed from our Young Adult collection, or singled out for labeling.

Melrose Public Library Mission Statement

The mission of Melrose Public Library is to inform, enrich, and empower all citizens by providing and promoting free access to the universe of information and ideas.

Labeling and Rating Systems

An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*

Libraries do not advocate the ideas found in their collections or in resources accessible through the library. The presence of books and other resources in a library does not indicate endorsement of their contents by the library. Likewise, providing access to digital information does not indicate endorsement or approval of that information by the library. Labeling and rating systems present distinct challenges to these intellectual freedom principles.

Labels on library materials may be viewpoint-neutral directional aids designed to save the time of users, or they may be attempts to prejudice or discourage users or restrict their access to materials. When labeling is an attempt to prejudice attitudes, it is a censor's tool. The American Library Association opposes labeling as a means of predisposing people's attitudes toward library materials.

Prejudicial labels are designed to restrict access, based on a value judgment that the content, language, or themes of the material, or the background or views of the creator(s) of the material, render it inappropriate or offensive for all or certain groups of users. The prejudicial label is used to warn, discourage, or prohibit users or certain groups of users from accessing the material. Such labels sometimes are used to place materials in restricted locations where access depends on staff intervention.

Viewpoint-neutral directional aids facilitate access by making it easier for users to locate materials. The materials are housed on open shelves and are equally accessible to all users, who may choose to consult or ignore the directional aids at their own discretion.

Directional aids can have the effect of prejudicial labels when their implementation becomes proscriptive rather than descriptive. When directional aids are used to forbid access or to suggest moral or doctrinal endorsement, the effect is the same as prejudicial labeling.

Many organizations use rating systems as a means of advising either their members or the general public regarding the organizations' opinions of the contents and suitability or appropriate age for use of certain books, films, recordings, Web sites, games, or other materials. The adoption, enforcement, or endorsement of any of these rating systems by a library violates the *Library Bill of Rights*. When requested, librarians should provide information about rating systems equitably, regardless of viewpoint. Adopting such systems into law or library policy may be unconstitutional. If labeling or rating systems are mandated by law, the library should seek legal advice regarding the law's applicability to library operations.

Libraries sometimes acquire resources that include ratings as part of their packaging. Librarians should not endorse the inclusion of such rating systems; however, removing or destroying the ratings—if placed there by, or with permission of, the copyright holder—could constitute expurgation (see "Expurgation of Library Materials: An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*"). In addition, the inclusion of ratings on bibliographic records in library catalogs is a violation of the *Library Bill of Rights*.

Prejudicial labeling and ratings presuppose the existence of individuals or groups with wisdom to determine by authority what is appropriate or inappropriate for others. They presuppose that individuals must be directed in making up their minds about the ideas they examine. The American Library Association affirms the rights of individuals to form their own opinions about resources they choose to read or view.

Adopted July 13, 1951, by the ALA Council; amended June 25, 1971; July 1, 1981; June 26, 1990; January 19, 2005; July 15, 2009.

Professional Journal Reviews

School Library Journal

Grade 9 Up. An epistolary narrative cleverly places readers in the role of recipients of Charlie's unfolding story of his freshman year in high school. From the beginning, Charlie's identity as an outsider is credibly established. It was in the spring of the previous school year that his best friend committed suicide and now that his class has gone through a summer of change, the boy finds that he has drifted away from old friends. He finds a new and satisfying social set, however, made up of several high school seniors, bright bohemians with ego-bruising insights and, really, hearts of gold. These new friends make more sense to Charlie than his star football-playing older brother ever did and they are able to teach him about the realities of life that his older sister doesn't have the time to share with him. Grounded in a specific time (the 1991/92 academic year) and place (western Pennsylvania), Charlie, his friends, and family are palpably real. His grandfather is an embarrassing bigot; his new best friend is gay; his sister must resolve her pregnancy without her boyfriends support. Charlie develops from an observant wallflower into his own man of action, and, with the help of a therapist, he begins to face the sexual abuse he had experienced as a child. This report on his life will engage teen readers for years to come.

- Francisca Goldsmith, Berkeley Public Library, CA, *School Library Journal* Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Kirkus Reviews

Aspiring filmmaker/first-novelist Chbosky adds an upbeat ending to a tale of teenaged angst the right combination of realism and uplift to allow it on high school reading lists, though some might object to the sexuality, drinking, and dope-smoking. More sophisticated readers might object to the rip-off of Salinger, though Chbosky pays homage by having his protagonist read *Catcher in the Rye*. Like Holden, Charlie oozes sincerity, rails against celebrity phoniness, and feels an extraliterary bond with his favorite writers (Harper Lee, Fitzgerald, Kerouac, Ayn Rand, etc.). But Charlie's no rich kid: the third child in a middle-class family, he attends public school in western Pennsylvania, has an older brother who plays football at Penn State, and an older sister who worries about boys a lot. An epistolary novel addressed to an anonymous friend, Charlie's letters cover his first year in high school, a time haunted by the recent suicide of his best friend. Always quick to shed tears, Charlie also feels guilty about the death of his Aunt Helen, a troubled woman who lived with Charlie's family at the time of her fatal car wreck. Though he begins as a friendless observer, Charlie is soon pals with seniors Patrick and Sam (for Samantha), stepsiblings who include Charlie in their circle, where he smokes pot for the first time, drops acid, and falls madly in love with the inaccessible Sam. His first relationship ends miserably because Charlie remains compulsively honest, though he proves a loyal friend (to Patrick when he's gay-bashed) and brother (when his sister needs an abortion). Depressed when all his friends prepare for college, Charlie has a catatonic breakdown, which resolves itself neatly and reveals a long-repressed truth about Aunt Helen. A plain-written narrative suggesting that passivity, and thinking too much, lead to confusion and anxiety. Perhaps the folks at (co-publisher) MTV see the synergy here with *Daria* or any number of videos by the sensitive singer-songwriters they feature.

- *Kirkus Reviews* Copyright ©1999, *Kirkus Associates, LP*. All rights reserved.

Booklist

"Dear friend, I am writing to you because she said you listen and understand." In his letters to a never-identified person, 15-year-old Charlie's freshman high-school year (1991-92) and coming-of-age ring fresh and true. First-novelist Chbosky captures adolescent angst, confusion, and joy as Charlie reveals

his innermost thoughts while trying to discover who he is and whom he is to become. Intellectually precocious, Charlie seems a tad too naive in many other ways, yet his reflections on family interactions, first date, drug experimentation, first sexual encounter, and regular participation in *Rocky Horror Picture Show* screenings are compelling. He vacillates between full involvement in the crazy course of his life and backing off completely. Eventually, he discovers that to be a whole person who knows how to be a real friend rather than a patsy, he must confront his past—and remember what his beloved, deceased Aunt Helen did to him. Charlie is a likable kid whose humor-laced trials and tribulations will please both adults and teens.

— Sally Estes, *Booklist* Feb. 15, 1999



Trustees of Melrose Public Library

April 5, 2011 at 7:30 PM

Agenda

1. Call to order
2. Review of bills
3. Correspondence
 - a. Board of Library Commissioners – grant award received (second installment)
 - b. Liz Goodwin nominated for MLA Paralibrarian of the Year
4. Announcements
 - a. *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky challenged (see enclosures)
 - b. copper downspouts stolen
 - c. *Library Snapshot Day* – April 14
 - d. yearly allotment of computers purchased
 - e. movie license acquired
 - f. staff members to attend Massachusetts Library Association Conference in Danvers
 - g. assault in library
 - h. DJK to administer trust funds through annual outside audit
 - i. Children's on-going *Lego* program an overwhelming success
5. New Business
6. Adjournment



Trustees of Melrose Public Library

April 5, 2011

The regular meeting of the Board of Library Trustees was held Tuesday, April 5, 2011. Present were: Mary M. Edwards, Carol B. Hoffman, Vicki L. Kaufman, Nancy F. Kukura, Rosemary U. McIntire, Edward W. Waystack, Linda C. Walsh and Dennis J. Kelley.

The monthly bills were reviewed and approved for payment. The minutes of the last meeting were approved as written.

C. Richard Carlson, VP, UBS, met with the trustees to review the progress of trust funds. Mr. Carlson suggested that the funds could earn a better return if they were "unitized" into one investment fund with each fund retaining its appropriate share (percentage) of the whole. Funds would retain their unique name. The appropriate time to implement this change would be at the end of the fiscal year after the audit and with the approval of the City Solicitor.

The second installment of the state aid grant has been received (\$12,916.60).

Dennis Kelley announced that Liz Goodwin was nominated by Diane Wall to be the Massachusetts Library Association paraprofessional of the year. The winner will be announced at the MLA Annual Conference.

Dennis Kelley informed the trustees that an official challenge was received for the book titled *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. A patron wanted the book removed from the Young Adult Collection. A committee of three professional staff members read and discussed the book and determined that the book should remain in the Young Adult Collection. It should be noted that there are approximately thirty copies of the book in the NOBLE database and all copies are in YA collections. The patron was informed of the committee's decision.

The trustees reviewed and approved the FY12 library budget with the understanding that in September the alderman will be asked to approve an additional appropriation for the library as follows: \$61,500 from trust funds, and approximately \$13,000 from the Donation Account and \$13,000 from the Fine Account.

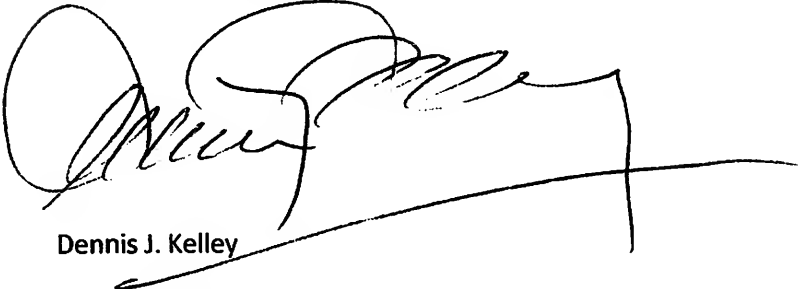
Dennis Kelley announced that two copper downspouts were stolen from the exterior of the building. The city's insurance carries a large deductible so the downspouts are not an insurance matter.

Linda Walsh announced that MPL will participate in *Library Snapshot Day* (April 14). A photographer from the *Melrose Free Press* will take pictures at various library events throughout the day.

In keeping with the Board's computer replacement policy, six new computers were purchased with trust fund income and an additional computer will be purchased at a later date.

Dennis Kelley expressed his sincere appreciation for the support and friendship of the trustees throughout his tenure as library director.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dennis Kelley", with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Dennis J. Kelley

Secretary to the Board of Library Trustees